

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the House passed H.Res. 1359, a resolution calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. It has been four long years since Gilad, then 19 years old, was kidnapped by Hamas. Hamas, in direct violation of international human rights law, has refused to allow Gilad any contact with his family, and has further refused to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access to determine his well-being. It is a war crime for Hamas to hold Gilad hostage in order to compel the Israeli government to accede to Hamas' demands.

Madam Speaker, the time for Hamas to release Gilad Shalit is now. Right now. It is simply unconscionable for Hamas to engage in such a vicious and cruel exercise in inhumanity. One of both Israeli and American societies' highest and most noble ideals is to never leave a soldier behind. The passage of this resolution reaffirms the United States commitment to continue fighting for Gilad's unconditional and immediate release so that he may return to his family.